

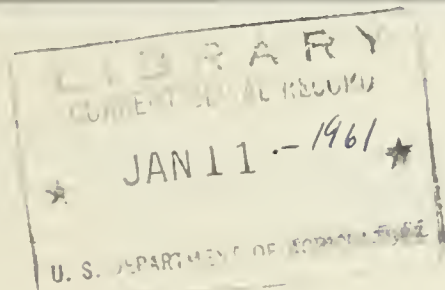
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FOREIGN AGRICULTURE CIRCULAR

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Foreign Agricultural Service Washington D.C.



LENTILS
FDP 7-60
September 15, 1960

THE U.S. SHIFTS FROM LENTIL

IMPORTER TO EXPORTER

The U.S. has shifted in the last 3 years from net importer to net exporter of lentils, as happened immediately following World War II, for both dry beans and peas. The shifts after the war made the United States the world's largest exporter of beans and one of the 3 largest exporters of dry peas.

The first officially reported U.S. lentil exports were in 1957 when 11,000 bags were reported by Europeans who imported them. The next year, 34,000 bags were reported, and 70,000 bags in 1959. These figures may not represent total exports as they cover only the imports acknowledged by the European countries in reporting their International trade. U.S. Customs does not report lentil exports separately, but includes them with dry yellow peas.

The U.S. shift from lentil importer to exporter resulted in major part from sharply increased production in the United States, and reduced production in, and exports from, Latin America.

U.S. lentil acreage has jumped 56 percent above a year ago, 100 percent above 1958, and a phenomenal 530 percent above 1956. Lentils are a relatively new crop in the United States, but have long been important in the Mediterranean area. They were the pottage for which Esau sold his birthright 3,800 years ago.

The lentil is a legume of the same family as beans and peas, and of similarly high food value. It is held to have even more of some nutritive elements. It is one of the oldest of domesticated crops

having originated, probably in the mountain region of Southwest Asia between Hindu-Kush and the Himalayas. Numerous Sanskrit names testify to its ancient cultivation and studies of the vast world-wide collections of lentils indicate its Asiatic origin.

There are several kinds of lentils, all belonging to the family of legumes. Only 3 kinds are important agriculturally, and 2 of these are used as grain forage crops. The common lentil, Lens esculenta is the most important economically. Its seed is used for food much like beans and peas, and usually in soups. The seed of the lentil is flat and disc shaped, about 1/16 of an inch thick and 1/8 to 1/4 inch in diameter, usually with very thin edges.

Lentil production in 41 reporting countries has totaled about 23,000,000 bags annually in recent years. The latest reported production of each of these countries follows, in bags of 100 pounds each:

Americas, 11 countries reporting:

Chile 388,000; United States, 300,000 (office estimate); Ecuador, 176,000; Argentina, 101,000; Peru, 90,000; Mexico, 62,000; Colombia, 35,000; Brazil, 35,000; Guatemala, 20,000; Venezuela, 3,000; Uruguay, 2,000; Total, 1,212,000.

Western Europe, 8 countries reporting:

Spain, 772,000; Italy, 276,000; Greece, 214,000; France, 172,000; Yugoslavia, 26,000; Luxembourg, 22,000; Cyprus, 16,000; Austria, 7,000; Total 1,505,000.

Eastern Europe, 5 countries reporting:

U.S.S.R., 6,000,000; Bulgaria, 97,000; Rumania, 71,000; Czechoslovakia, 16,000; Albania, 2,000; Total 6,186,000.

Asia, 9 countries reporting:

India, 4,145,000; Pakistan, 2,094,000; Turkey, 1,367,000; Syria, 789,000; Iran, 617,000; Palestine, 167,000; Jordan, 161,000; Iraq, 77,000; Lebanon, 44,000; Total, 9,461,000.

Africa, 8 countries reporting:

Ethiopia, 1,630,000; Egypt, 1,100,000; Sudan, 882,000; Tunisia, 331,000; French Morocco, 155,000; Algeria, 154,000; Spanish Morocco, 132,000; South Africa, 50,000; Total, 4,434,000.

Grand Total, 41 countries: 22,798,000 bags.

Any U.S. claim to importance in lentil production stems not from the volume produced, but from the rapid and recent increases. For approximately 30 years, the United States has produced only nominal quantities of lentils. Then in 1958, 1959, and 1960, production soared to 100,000 to 150,000 and now there is prospect in 1960 of possibly 300,000 bags. The United States now ranks with Argentina and Chile as one of the largest lentil producers in the Americas. Its production is concentrated in the Palouse area of Washington and Idaho, about 75 miles south of Spokane.

Argentina and Chile, while being moderately small producers on a world basis, have been, until recently, among the world's largest exporters of lentils, and a major source of U.S. supply. During recent years, these countries have been infected with a rust, Uro Myces, which in several seasons has reduced the quality and quantity of lentil production sharply. In Argentina, production has dropped 80 percent, while in Chile the loss has been less severe. Reduced quality and quantity of exports from these countries has caused sharp rises in world prices. Beginning about 1957, prices in the United States soared upward to \$20 per hundred pounds, f.o.b. country shipping points, as compared with less than \$10 prior to that time.

Of added, and perhaps lasting, importance is the U.S. embargo established in May 1959 against lentil imports from Latin America to prevent introduction of the rust into the United States. This action made the U.S. market virtually dependent upon domestic production. The nearest other sources of sizable imports are Turkey and Syria. There however, U.S. buyers would compete with the nearer European buyers.

The United States imported from 70,000 to 100,000 bags of lentils a year in the 1940's, principally from Chile and Argentina. Imports dropped in the late 1950's to as low as 15,000 bags a year, principally from the same sources. Today, U.S. lentils are sold in Europe in competition with the big lentil exporters of the Middle East and South America.

The largest lentil producing countries, India, Pakistan, and the U.S.S.R., do very little international trading in lentils. The largest exporters have been Syria, Turkey, Morocco, Lebanon, recently Ethiopia, and when the crop is not reduced by the rust, Chile and Argentina. Argentina has exported less than 30,000 bags a year since 1956, compared with a pre-rust normal of up to 400,000 bags. Chile reports an exportable supply this year of about 300,000 bags, which is near normal.

The larger lentil importers are West Germany, France, the United Kingdom, and Lebanon. The last named apparently engages extensively in reexport of lentils imported. Syria is a major source for Lebanese reexports.

The major flow of international trade in lentils is from the Middle East and the Americas, including the United States, into Western Europe. Before the rust, the flow was from the Mediterranean and South America into Western Europe -- with a minor movement from Argentina and Chile into the U.S.

Sources of Western Europe's imported lentils follow:

LENTILS: Source of imports by 15 Western European countries 1/

Source	Calendar Years						
	Average : 1935-39	Average : 1950-54	1955	1956	1957	1958	1959
	1,000 : bags 2/	1,000 : bags 2/	1,000 : bags 2/	1,000 : bags 2/	1,000 : bags 2/	1,000 : bags 2/	1,000 : bags 2/
Americas:							
United States	0	0	0	0	11	34	70
Chile	585	111	166	212	213	273	261
Argentina	0	136	175	300	87	15	5
Total	585	251	341	512	311	322	336
Middle East:							
Syria	181	55	184	269	5	136	35
Lebanon	0	2	35	171	141	156	117
Iran	0	2	0	0	10	55	13
Turkey	26	35	4	0	0	69	238
Total	207	96	223	440	156	416	403
Africa:							
Algeria	8	66	175	273	91	71	89
Morocco	59	16	71	86	55	199	114
Tunisia	0	2	12	22	3	2	0
Ethiopia	0	26	8	4	0	72	133
Total	67	120	266	385	149	348	343
Other countries:	3/ 1,216	4/ 18	5/ 2	6/ 3	0	7/ 4	8/ 9
Grand total	2,075	469	832	1,340	616	1,086	1,062

1/ Austria, Belgium-Luxembourg, Denmark, France, West Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom.

2/ 100-pound bags.

3/ 868,000 bags from U.S.S.R.; 208,000, India; 84,000, Rumania; and 56,000, Hungary.

4/ 10,000 bags from Union of South Africa; 4,000, Brazil; 2,000, Hungary; 1,000, Jordan; and 1,000, Iraq.

5/ From Hungary.

6/ 2,000 bags from India and 1,000 bags from U.S.S.R.

7/ From Union of South Africa.

8/ 7,000 bags from Union of South Africa and 2,000 bags from Hungary.